THE LODGE
(working title)

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(1) INT. CHURCH - DAY (90s VIDEO)

Several short grainy Hi8 video recordings from the 90s.

A bald man with a long beard - apparently kind of a PRIEST - speaking to his disciples.

PRIEST
Who believes that God can do anything?

The camera swerves to the people sitting in the pews of a plain modern wooden church. More a barn than a stone-built house of God. These are men, women, and children, all dressed very similarly in simple beige and yellow. Hands rise. Mothers hold up the hands of their children who are seated beside them or on their laps.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
God can do anything. So let us pray:
I do what you want me to do.

ALL
I do what you want me to do.

PRIEST
I say what you want me to say.

ALL
I say what you want me to say.

PRIEST
I think what you want me to think.

ALL
I think what you want me to think.

CUT TO BLACK

(2) INT. CHURCH – DAY (90s VIDEO)

Fearful eyes. The pale face of a red-headed twelve-year-old GIRL. She's tense. The camera zooms towards her. The image is blurred, then comes into focus. The girl's eyes wander around a room we cannot see. Observing people we can only hear. They are singing a religious song.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)
Then sings my soul
My Savior, God, to Thee
How great thou art
How great thou art

Two hands appear above the girl's head. They are folded in prayer. Suddenly the hands open, blood runs down onto the girl, colors her face red, runs down onto the girl's white dress. The hands fetch new blood off-screen, once more pouring it over the girl. We are witnessing a sinister baptism.

A hand makes a cross on the girl's forehead, smearing the blood. The camera zooms away. Now we see the priest from earlier making this cross, beside him a pail of blood.

CUT TO BLACK

(3) INT. KITCHEN - DAY (90s VIDEO)

The video camera turns on again, and again the first images are blurred. A common room with a long table. A flock of disciples, still clothed in beige and yellow, sit around the table. An elderly lady is serving bean stew with a ladle. The walls are overly decorated with religious imagery: posters beside naive drawings of Mary and Jesus, stickers beside plastic figures of saints.

Seated at the table is the bald priest. He rises and opens his arms as if to bless the food. The palms of his hands show heavy scar tissue. To his left: the red-headed girl and a 12-year-old BOY with a port-wine stain across his face. The camera shakily zooms towards the boy: tears are running down the port-wine stain. The red-headed girl, his sister, looks at him pityingly but does nothing. The boy's mouth is glued shut with broad red duct tape. Written on the tape in black is the word "SIN." In front of him, as if to taunt him, a full plate of food.

CUT TO BLACK

(4) INT. CHURCH - DAY (90s VIDEO)

Zoom towards the palm of a girl's delicate hand. Suddenly, the tip of a knife boring into the palm, blood flowing.

SHRILL SCREAMS OF PAIN (O.S.)

Blood drips onto a plastic figurine of the Virgin Mary. This, too, appears a little like a baptism.

CUT TO BLACK

SCREAMING CONTINUES (O.S)

TITLE **THE LODGE**

(5) INT./EXT. HOUSE/YARD - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Night. Silence. We are floating towards the door of a typical American home with a front yard. Instead of entering, we slowly glide up the wall along a drain pipe, pass dark windows until we reach one that is dimly lit. This recalls the famous scene out of Dario Argento's Tenebrae. We look into the half-lit room, we glide inside.

A pink girl's room. Not a person in sight. Just a bed, a white dresser, a child's desk. A small, lit floor-lamp. It's surprisingly tidy.

LAURA (O.S.)
Mia?

We leave the room, glide through the door, come to a hallway with stairs, still no one in sight. We keep moving, down the stairs and into a typical American kitchen.

Round the kitchen table, a family: mother, father, a teenaged boy, a younger girl. Here, too, everything is strangely quiet. We see that the table is set, we see four plates, each with a steak, bright yellow corn on the cob, and green salad. A little too green.

LAURA (O.S.)
(calling loudly)
Mia?!

A blinding light switches on. Suddenly, the whole room begins to shake. The house starts to move. Only now do we notice that the food - the steak, the corn - is made of plastic, as are the people surrounding it. These are dolls in a doll's house, the father doll falls off his seat.

We see LAURA - a beautiful, red-headed woman in her late 30s wearing a slightly rushed expression - pushing the doll's house aside to check if her daughter is hiding under the bed. Nothing. Laura sighs in irritation and looks around the rest of the room, annoyed. It's pink and looks astonishingly like the girl's room in the dollhouse.

LAURA
We're leaving!!!

Laura is now sounding pretty impatient. She pulls the Mama-Doll out of the dollhouse and places her in a red toy car on the desk, right beside a professional looking microscope and a mason jar filled with scrimmaging sea monkeys.

Laura takes one last irritated look around the room.

(6) INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - DAY

Laura leaves the bedroom, goes out into the hall. She keeps calling.

LAURA
(stressed)
Mia!! Aiden!! We REALLY need to go. This isn't funny anymore.

She opens the door to a second room, looks in, searching.

(7) INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

A small hand takes the two dolls - the teenager and the girl - out of the dollhouse. The father doll stays behind, on the floor. The hand places the two dolls in the toy car with the mother. Then the hand lifts the car off the desk.

(8) INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Blinding sunlight. The window of a yellow station wagon is lowered. Behind it we see MIA, age 10, with an intelligent, alert gaze. She is holding her face into the cool head wind. Parked beside her on the backseat is the red car as well as Mia's brother AIDEN, age 15, a teenager who has grown tall a little too quickly. He is wearing headphones.

MUFFLED PUNK ROCK MUSIC
FROM HEADPHONES

The mother Laura is sitting at the wheel, rummaging in her bag, which is placed on the passenger seat.

LAURA
(reproachfully, to the kids)
We're 20 minutes late!

Laura is glancing rapidly back and forth between the bag and the road, pulling out her makeup kit. At a stop light, Laura grabs the rearview mirror and looks into it: fine lines around the eyes, fine lines around the mouth. She puts on makeup as neatly and quickly as she can. Mascara, eyeliner. She is sweating, and the make-up starts to run a little. When the light turns green, she keeps the open lipstick in her hand, grabs the steering wheel, and continues to drive, ready to apply it at the next stoplight.

MIA
Is **she** going to be there?

LAURA
(not really paying attention)

I don’t know.

MIA
She’s such a retard!

LAURA
(strict)
That’s an ugly word.

(9) INT. CAR - DAY

Laura, now nicely made up, parks in front of a large house. She checks her face in the rearview mirror one last time and gets out of the car.

(10) EXT. IN FRONT OF RICHARD’S HOUSE - DAY

Laura wants to close the car door but falters: she sees a movement behind one of the curtains in the upper level of the house. She briefly hesitates and looks up. The shadowy figure of a woman appears to be standing behind the curtain.

Laura slams the car door, almost aggressively. Grumpily, she grabs two travel bags out of the trunk. Only now does she realize neither Mia nor Aiden have made any indication of getting out. She calls warningly into the back of the car:

LAURA
(a little harsher than necessary)
You guys waiting for the second coming?

Sluggishly the kids start gathering their things off the back seat. Then they get out of the car.

The door of the house is opened, RICHARD, early 40s, alert face, masculine, no pretty boy, is standing in the doorway. He waves at Mia and Aiden.

Mia reacts with excitement, runs towards Richard. Aiden follows, rather chilly.

At the door, Richard hugs Mia. Aiden, standing further off, doesn’t make an effort to greet him.

RICHARD
(with feigned strictness)
You too, Mister!

Whereupon Aiden hugs his father a little half-heartedly.

Irritated, Laura lifts the kids’ bags and casts one last glance towards the first floor window. The female figure from earlier has disappeared.

Just then, Richard draws a 10-dollar bill out of his pocket. He presses the money into Mia's hand.

RICHARD
Go get some candy... Mom and I need to talk.

Laura, the kids' bags still in hand, is visibly surprised and is about to call after the kids, when Mia gets in first:

MIA
(smarty pants)
No corn-syrup, gelatine, or artificial colors!

Laura can't help smiling.

(11) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - DAY

Laura and Richard in an expensive kitchen, obviously new and seemingly barely used.

RICHARD
Tea..? Coffee..?

Laura doesn't respond, she looks around questioningly, nods towards the ceiling. No need to pose the question.

RICHARD
(terse)
She isn't here.

Laura nods but remains skeptical.

LAURA
Then I'll have coffee...

RICHARD
Hope I have some. Gave it up a while back.

Richard fills a kettle, turns it on.

RICHARD
(holds up a jar)
Instant?

Laura nods absently.

LAURA
(direct)
You wanted to talk.

Richard seems a little uncertain.

RICHARD
Yes...

He turns away from Laura and spoons coffee into a cup.

A DOOR SLAMS (O.S.)

Laura turns toward the noise. Through a screen door, she sees what looks like a female figure scurry out. Hard to tell. Laura decides not to get into it. Likewise Richard. He tries to say something, he’s uncomfortable.

RICHARD
(hesitant)
Grace and I... we... we’re going to get married. This April.

Though Laura's expression doesn't change, her entire body seems to slump in a barely perceptible way.

RICHARD (CONT’D)
(even more uncertain)
...we... we need to finalize our divorce soon...

Richard seems very anxious about how Laura will react. Laura however, in shock, seems incapable of reacting at all. Instead of making a scene, she simply turns around and leaves.

Richard, perplexed, watches her go.

(12) INT. RICHARD’S HOUSE - EVENING

Mikado-sticks are dropped and fall on top of one another on the living room floor. A child’s hand picks one up with extreme care. Suddenly:

AIDEN
(cries out in triumph)
It moved!

MIA
You only saw it ‘cause you wanted to see it!

AIDEN
Bullshit!

Mia turns towards her father.

MIA
Dad..! What's it called again..? When you see something 'cause you want to see it?

RICHARD
Cheating.

MIA
The science word!

Richard smiles, proud of his daughter.

RICHARD
Perception bias.

Mia throws her brother a look of triumph.

AIDEN
That’s two words. And it’s still bullshit..!

Aiden messes up the Mikado sticks in annoyance. He heads to the sofa, pulling his phone out of his pocket, and starts playing on it.

MIA
You’ve already had your two hours.

Aiden ignores her, which makes Mia even angrier. She turns to her father.

MIA
Papa?

Richard looks up from his laptop.

RICHARD
(soothingly)
You can go ahead, too.

He smiles at Mia, who looks at her father with wide eyes.

RICHARD (CONT’D)
Just don’t tell Mama.
(conspiratorial)
You know what she’s like.

(13) INT. LAURAS HOUSE - EVENING

A talk-show host on the radio laughing with his guests. Laura stands at the sink, carefully picking dead petals and leaves from a vase of white lilies.

When she's finished, she puts the leaves down the garbage disposal, then walks across the room, places the vase next to her purse on the family-sized table, adjusts a couple of flowers, examines her handiwork, then sits down.

She pours the remainder of a bottle of wine into a glass and takes a sip, staring at the flowers as she does. She finishes her glass, then pushes the cork back into the empty bottle.

For a long moment, she sits motionless and staring, the only sound coming from the radio.

And then - in a single, almost casual movement - she takes a small handgun from her purse, places the nozzle in her mouth and pulls the trigger.

The talk-show host chats away cheerfully as blood trickles down the wall.

CUT TO BLACK

AGAIN LAUGHTER ON
THE RADIO, THEN
TOTAL SILENCE.

AND EVEN MORE
SILENCE.

THEN: SEVERAL KNOCKS
ON A DOOR

(14) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE – LATE MORNING

Richard is wearing a black suit. He is standing at the door to a room on the second floor of his house, knocking on the door. No reaction. He jiggles the knob, it's locked. He knocks again.

RICHARD
(carefully)
Mia?!

Mia has apparently locked herself in. Richard is at a loss.

RICHARD
Mia? Come on… will you *please* come out… please!

But the door remains closed. Richard's stumped. He goes to the top of the stairs.

RICHARD
(calling down)

Aiden?! Aiden?! Can you come up here a sec? I need your help.

Then he turns to Mia's door again, twists the knob.

RICHARD
Mia!?

Aiden comes up the stairs.

(15) INT. AT MIA'S DOOR – LATE MORNING

Aiden is sitting on the floor, talking to Mia through the closed door. We can't really hear what he's saying. Again and again he sends her texts from his phone. Eventually, the door opens as if by an invisible hand.

(16) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE – LATE MORNING

Richard in the living room. He is speaking urgently into his phone.

RICHARD
(irritated)
Yes… lilies… Hall C… C… we went through all this last week...

Out of the corner of his eyes Richard notices Mia and Aiden coming down the stairs together, holding hands. At first, he seems relieved. Then he frowns: Aiden is appropriately dressed in a black suit, but Mia is wearing a white dress.

RICHARD
(into phone)
Sorry, will be right with you...

Richard holds his hand over the receiver.

RICHARD
(to Mia)
Why aren't you wearing the pretty black dress we bought just for the funeral?

Mia looks at her father and shrugs.

RICHARD
(into phone)
Hello?... Yes... call you right back.

Richard hangs up and bends down to Mia. He touches her head.

RICHARD
(tenderly)

Darling. Everybody's going to be in black. You'll be the only one in white.

He looks at his daughter imploringly.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
You'll stand out.

Mia still won't reply, Richard gets down on his knees to talk to Mia.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Hmm?

Mia finally answers, with much effort.

MIA
(halting, with a soft voice)
... Mama liked it so much...and I never wore it.

In her hand, Mia is clutching the Mama-Doll that we know from her dollhouse. She, too, is wearing a white dress.

(17) EXT. CEMETERY – LATE MORNING

Blinding sunlight. The face of the Mama-Doll in close-up. Rigid expression, large blue eyes, long lashes.

PRIEST (O.S.)
She was always there for her family, a help to anyone in need. That is how we will keep her in our hearts.

The doll in white is listening with unchanged expression.

PRIEST (OFF, CONT'D)
Birth and death are two doors through which we must tread...

Mia, clutching the Mama-Doll, is rubbing her eyes. They are red from crying. Her tormented face contrasts starkly to the stiff smile of the plastic doll. At her side stands her brother Aiden, pale, deeply sad, head down. Beside him his father, holding Aiden's shoulders helplessly. Behind them, countless mourners.

The sun is burning down. Again and again, the guests wipe their eyes with hankies. But they also wipe their brows, napes, and bald spots - that's how hot it is. Sweat stains shirts. As predicted, everyone apart from Mia is wearing black. She is the one white spot in a black sea of sorrow. The priest is still speaking, Mia can't seem to hear him. Her gaze wanders into the distance. She spots a twenty-something-year-old woman watching from a copse of trees in the distance.

PRIEST (OFF, CONT'D)
...let's take each other by the hand...

Mia has just heard this when Aiden is already taking her right hand. Another guest takes Mia's left hand. By the time Mia's looked back to the copse of trees, the female figure has disappeared.

(18) EXT. CEMETERY – LATE MORNING

Mourners hold black balloons in their hands, as if awaiting a command. Attached to the balloons are phials filled with letters and notes. Richard nods at Aiden, who starts a song on his iPhone. Music comes from small wireless boxes beside the coffin. "Sailing" by Rod Stewart.

ROD STEWART
I am sailing, I am sailing
Home again 'cross the sea
I am sailing, stormy waters
To be near you, to be free...

Mia tucks a handwritten note into a phial attached to the string of her balloon. Tearfully, she then ties this string around the Mama-Doll. She wants to send the doll straight to heaven along with her message. But fixing the string to the doll isn't that easy. Aiden tries helping his sister, but she pushes him away: she wants to do this herself. When she's finally done, Richard nods. Everyone – including Aiden and Mia - lets their balloons go. The balloons rise to heaven.

Except Mia's balloon. Mama-Doll is too heavy. Slowly the doll sinks back to the ground. Mia's eyes are filled with tears, tears of anger. With a fierce yank, she pulls the string off the doll. Now the balloon rises towards the sky. Without a note, without a doll.

The flying balloons briefly darken the tranquil sky and then sprinkle black across the blue. We watch the balloons go until the little black dots have disappeared. Suddenly, snowflakes start to fall. We pan down, suddenly no longer in a cemetery, it's no longer summer, soft snowy wind blows across the street where Richard's house is standing.

(19) EXT. VERANDA BEHIND RICHARD'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

On the covered veranda in the backyard stands, despite the wintery temperatures, a festively decorated table. It is set for four. Blankets lie on the chairs. Three plastic roast turkeys, strung up as decoration, are fluttering in the wind. In the backyard, beside the empty winter pool, Mia is sweeping the driveway.

Richard returns from the house with Aiden and sets up a heating lamp on the veranda. Aiden wants to leave, but Richard is holding him back.

RICHARD
Hang on.
(calls out)
Mia! Can you come here a second, please?

Mia sits down at the set table in her winter coat and hat.

RICHARD
Hey, careful!

Mia pushes her chair out a bit, so as not to upset anything on the table. Richard starts to talk, it seems almost a prepared speech.

RICHARD
Grace'll be here any minute now and before she does, there's something I need to discuss with you.
(he casts a brief glance at his phone)
What do you guys think about going to the mountains again for Christmas...?

MIA
(excited)
Silver Lake?

Richard grins at her and nods, Mia beams with joy. Aiden seems less enthused, he almost looks skeptical.

AIDEN
Thought you were working?

RICHARD
(carefully)
Yes, I am. But I can take you up when school breaks up and then join you on the 25th and...

Aiden sees where this is going...

AIDEN
You're saying **she** will be coming and staying with us?

RICHARD
(nodding)
I thought it would be a great opportunity to get to know Grace a little better. You don't really know her well and...

AIDEN
(interrupts, aggressive)
No way! I'm not going anywhere with her. Least of all at Christmas! Count me out. What are you, nuts!?

Richard tries to placate his son.

RICHARD
Aiden...

Just then the doorbell rings.

DING DONG

Aiden storms off in a huff.

AIDEN
Fuck you!

(20) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Richard is standing at the slightly opened front door, talking to someone outside. We see the shadow of a woman through the frosted glass pane.

Mia, hidden at the end of the hallway, beyond the kitchen, watches them. We can't hear what's being said, but it seems Richard is sheepishly apologizing for calling off dinner.

(21) EXT. VERANDA HINTER RICHARD'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Richard, Aiden, and Mia around the table on the veranda. They are wrapped in blankets. A plastic roast turkey is perched in the middle of the table. They eat lasagna in silence. The fourth seat is empty, the plate untouched. Mama-Doll sits – unseen by Aiden and Richard – beneath the tabletop on the fourth, empty chair. The atmosphere is as frosty as the temperature.

After a while, a text message PING breaks the silence. Richard pulls his phone out of his pant pocket, quickly checks it, then puts it away. Two more BUZZES follow, ignored by Richard. The kids cast each other knowing looks.

RICHARD
(trying to sound casual)
I'll have to go out again later...

(22) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Darkness in the house. Empty hallways. Quiet. The dishwasher washing monotonously. The plastic turkey is lying in the sink.

(23) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE / AIDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aiden lies in bed with headphones on, watching YouTube pranks on a smartphone. The screen coldly lights his face in the otherwise dark room. Above his bed is a slanted roof with multi-colored bouldering grips. Trophies adorn the shelves.

(24) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE / MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia also lies in bed, but this room is lit by a bedside lamp; it lights her dollhouse, too, which she has brought from her old house. At Mia's side lies the delicate Mama-Doll, to whom she reads a bedtime story. As though she were the Mother and the Mama-Doll the child.

MIA
(softly reading "The Little Prince")
But everyone thought it was a hat.
(she shows the doll the drawing)
My drawing however wasn't a hat. It was a giant snake digesting an elephant...

Suddenly we hear the FRONT DOOR SHUT and FOOTSTEPS COMING UP THE STAIRS. Mia quickly turns off the light, turns to the side, covers herself and the doll. She closes her eyes and pretends to be asleep.

Soon, her father enters, crosses the room, and sits on the side of her bed. He sits quietly for a few seconds, watching her back.

RICHARD
(softly)
Night Owl. I know you're not sleeping.

Mia won't turn around. Both are silent.

MIA
(her thin voice cuts the silence)

Will Grace be our new Mama?

Richard shakes his head, though his daughter can't see him, then he gently touches her back.

RICHARD
Mama will always be your Mama. Grace is a totally different person. You will like her once you get know her, but she will never replace your Mother.

Mia gazes unwaveringly at Mama-Doll, whom she clutches tightly.

MIA
How long have you known her?

Richard doesn't reply right away, so Mia adds:

MIA
Was she really your patient?

Richard hesitates for the briefest moment. Then:

RICHARD
Why would you think that!?

MIA
Mama told me.

Richard makes a defensive gesture with his hands, as though he wanted to wipe away what's been said. He doesn't seem particularly convincing.

RICHARD
Go to sleep, sweetheart.

(25) INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE / HALL - MORNING

The next morning, in the hallway on the first floor. Sunrays fall through the large glass windows. Mia and Aiden stand in front of a closed door, they are both quiet, they are listening. Mia wants to open the door, but Aiden holds her back. He pulls his phone out of his pocket and dials. His father's phone starts to RING downstairs.

RICHARD (O.S.)
(heard simultaneously from the living room and from Aiden's phone)
Yes?

AIDEN
(into phone)

Sorry dad, wrong number.

Aiden is about to hang up, when Richard continues.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Don’t forget to take out the trash!

AIDEN
Okay.

Aiden hangs up. He nods at Mia. She opens the door, careful and as quiet as possible. Both slide in.

(26) INT. RICHARD’S HOUSE / STUDY - MORNING

The kids stand in Richard’s office. Desk. Computer. Shelf. A yoga mat. Books are stacked in every corner. Books by Freud and Jung. Books on anxiety disorders and coming to terms with trauma. Psychiatry reference books. The kids carefully close the door behind them.

A little later. Aiden sits at his father’s computer, going through the digital patient files; he types quickly. Mia stands guard at the door. In amongst the mostly unintelligible files, Aiden finally finds something...

AIDEN
(triumphantly)
So she **was** his patient!

He continues reading. Mia comes over to stand beside her brother, both stare fixedly at the screen. Mia points at something. Aiden clicks on it, opening a newspaper article which shows a photograph of a girl of about 13. Beside her: the bald man in priest’s robes, his hand on the shoulders of the 12-year-old boy with the port wine-stain. Beside them: crosses, as well as dates of births and deaths.

MIA
(excited)
Click here

The sudden SOUND OF SHRILL SCREAMING emanates from the computer (we recognise this from the start of the movie).

Aiden and Mia are horrified, Aiden reflexively mutes the computer. On the screen, we see the Hi8 video of a bloody girl’s hand, beside it a pointed dagger. Blood dripping onto the Virgin Mary doll. Then the camera pans upwards, to the red-headed girl’s face, screaming mutely and clutching her bleeding palm.

Mia and Aiden are so entranced by the images that they haven't noticed their father's suddenly in the room.

Aiden quickly clicks the video off, and moves away from the computer even more quickly.

AIDEN
I had to look up something for Mia's school project and my computer's updating.

Both kids look at Richard ruefully, but he doesn't seem to have clocked what they're up to, and, surprisingly, doesn't scold them.

RICHARD
I wanted to talk to you about Silver Lake. I know none of this is easy for you. But it's important to me that you give Grace a chance.

The kids stare at their father, their faces are hard to interpret.

(27) EXT. IN FRONT OF RICHARD'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Days later, in front of the house. Richard is schlepping Mia's suitcase to the car, Aiden is carrying his own bag. Climbing rope and a carabiner hang from his backpack.

RICHARD
(trying to be funny)
You planning on doing some ice climbing?

Aiden can't hear him, through the loud music on his headphones. Richard shrugs, then loads Mia's luggage into the trunk.

Mia leaves the house with a plastic bag filled with water and sea monkeys in hand. Richard can hardly believe his eyes.

RICHARD
No way. The sea monkeys stay. If that bag bursts, I'll have the whole mess in my car.

Mia won't give up without a fight.

MIA
But I need them for school! I have to document them every day!

The father shakes his head resolutely.

(28) INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

The bag with the sea monkeys on Mia’s lap. The sea monkeys slosh back and forth to the rhythmic swaying of the car. Then the SUV stops, water and sea monkeys come to rest, the motor is turned off.

Through the foggy window, Mia sees an apartment building with outer balconies. The place has seen better days and appears quite dismal. Richard draws his phone out of his pocket, dials, the name “Grace” appears on the display. Mia turns back to her sea monkeys, just then a loud ringtone pipes up outside.

Mia is startled. The outline of a woman can be seen behind the foggy window. Beside her, a small white dog. Richard quickly gets out of the car, Mia wipes the car window with her hand and sees her father kissing the red-headed woman - this is GRACE - on the mouth, thus obscuring her face. Mia is embarrassed and turns away.

The front seats open. Richard is about to climb in but his phone rings. He checks the display.

RICHARD
(to Grace, sighing)
Sorry. Work.

Richard gets out again and steps away. Grace can’t go back. A little hesitant, she climbs into the passenger seat, holding the white poodle in her arm, which she places at her feet: GRADY. Then she looks round to the kids - friendly, attractive, late 20s, she looks a little like a younger version of Laura.

GRACE
Hi!

A few moments of trepid silence follow.

Then, suddenly, blood starts to flow from Grace’s nose and down her smiling lips, giving her beauty a touch of the monstrous. For a moment, it’s as though the world stands still in the car. Then Grace finally notices the nosebleed - frightened, she wipes it away with her bare hand.

(29) INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Later in the driving car. The kids are in the back. Mia’s backpack lies at her side. The Mama-Doll hangs from one of the backpack’s outside pockets (in place of a water bottle),

peeking out as though she's watching. Grace holds a Kleenex to her nose. Grady is at her feet and yowls every now and again. Richard looks at him begrudgingly. He's seemingly not at all happy that the dog is tagging along.

(30) INT. CAR - EVENING

The car winds along a narrow mountain road. No one has anything to say. Richard touches Grace's knee. Grace looks at him, infatuated. Aiden, listening to music, watches the two with a mixture of curiosity and revulsion. Mia looks out the window.

Later. Grace folds down the sun blinds to look in the mirror and control her nosebleed. She can see Mia watching her from behind. Grace smiles at her. Mia pretends not to notice and looks away.

Later. Mia and Aiden playing with their phones. Mia looks up.

MIA
Can we stop at the gas station?

RICHARD
(shaking his head)
I got gas before we hit the road.

MIA
What about my gummy bears?

RICHARD
(apologetic)
Darn... Forgot about those.

GRACE
(wants to do something nice; to Richard)
...there'll be another gas station soon, won't there, Richard?

She winks at Richard conspiratorialy.

(31) INT. CAR - EVENING

It's almost dark. More snow on the road. Richard drives carefully, the kids have fallen asleep on the back seat.

Richard stops at a general store with two ancient gas pumps out front; they're already in a mountainous area.

(32) INT. GAS STATION - EVENING

A skinny, sallow-faced teenager - WENDY - sits smoking behind the counter as she leafs through a magazine. Behind her, a picture on the wall. It shows a golden-haired Jesus with piercing eyes. The words below read: *No-one chills out in the fires of Hell.*

The door rings open and Richard walks in followed by Grace.

RICHARD
Hey Wendy!

WENDY
(excited)
Doctor Hall!

As she gets to her feet and stubs out the cigarette, Richard gestures urgently towards the bathroom at the back and rushes off.

Grace smiles at the girl. Wendy looks her up and down unashamedly and a little disparagingly, then she sits back down and goes back to her magazine.

Grace, slightly indignant, takes a pack of gummy bears off the candy rack beside the cash register and loudly puts it on the counter. She’s trying to get Wendy’s attention. It works: Wendy does look up from her magazine.

WENDY
Their Mama din' like 'em eating those.

GRACE
Excuse me?

WENDY
It's boiled-up pig bone.

Grace stares at her for a moment, then takes some coins out of her purse.

GRACE
Dollar fifty, right?

She puts the coins on the counter, picks up the candy and turns to go.

WENDY
Slut.

Grace stops dead. For a moment, it looks like she's going to turn and face the girl, but she steels herself and walks out.

(33) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE GAS STATION - EVENING

Grace on her way back to the car. Mia comes running towards her, followed closely by Aiden. Apparently, they've woken up. Grace is a little surprised; Mia storms past her towards the gas station, ignoring her. Grace watches her go with slight irritation, and watches through the shop window as Mia gives Wendy a massive hug.

Aiden lingers in the background, saying hello in a cool, adolescent way. Wendy is visibly happy to see them.

Grace turns around, stomping towards the car. She angrily throws the gummy bears in the trashcan by the gas pumps. Then gets in the car, angrily slams the door.

BANG

(34) INT. GAS STATION - EVENING

Wendy hands Richard a pack of mail that she has been keeping for him.

WENDY
Go ahead, read your way back to the Vietnam war...

Richard grins. Wendy gets a key from the drawer under the cash register.

WENDY (CONT'D)
D'you mind if I keep this one? Grampa Charlie and I've got to deliver wood...and...

RICHARD
(quickly)
...**of course** the spare key stays with you! Same as usual...

(35) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - EVENING

Headlights break through a forest in the dark, across a snowy road. It's completely dark when the car reaches the lodge. The travelers get out.

Richard and the kids enter the house with suitcase and bags while Grace stays outside a little while longer.

GRACE
(gesturing towards her dog)
Will follow you in a minute...

Grady runs around, snuffles, pees. Grace has a look around. Snow and solitude, wherever one might look. The cold moonlight falls onto the mountains, the bare cliffs which can be guessed at in the distance rather than seen. The lodge, the dark, almost black looking two-story wooden house is standing on its own, almost abandoned to nature. Beyond, the forest spreads, black as night, its pine trees swaying back and forth as though they are trying to motion to her.

(36) INT. LODGE - EVENING

Grace enters the Lodge, Grady at her heels. In the hallway, she stumbles over a dog basket on the floor.

RICHARD
(calling from the living room)
I've set up the dog's spot...did you see? I don't want him in here.

Grace gulps, but doesn't say anything. She lets Grady into his little home.

Then Grace enters the living room. Mia is pouring her sea monkeys into a water glass, Richard is making a fire. Grace stands around with a certain helplessness. The others are automatically doing their most necessary things, as they have done them many times before.

RICHARD
(to Grace, in passing)
Bedrooms are upstairs...

Grace drags her suitcase on wheels up the stairs, step by step.

BANG, BANG, BANG,
BANG

(37) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - LATE EVENING

Grace rolls her suitcase into the bedroom. A large bed, a closet, and a crucifix. She glances at it longer than at the other things.

She sets down her suitcase, opens it, takes out three presents wrapped in cheesy Christmas paper. She hides them on the highest shelf of the closet.

Then she starts unpacking clothes and hanging them in the closet. She also takes a plastic bag out of the suitcase, filled with pharmaceuticals.

Later. Grace is sitting on her bed. She’s finished unpacking and has nothing left to do. Her gaze meets a picture on the nightstand, of Laura and Richard - they are gazing amorously into the camera. Decisively, she opens the drawer to the nightstand, and decisively she puts the picture away.

Richard enters the bedroom. He smiles at Grace - alone at last.

GRACE
Why'd you stop coming...?

RICHARD
Hmm..?

GRACE
You and Laura.

Not the question Richard expected. Nevertheless, he answers:

RICHARD
Laura didn’t want to… too much fighting.
(after the serious response he continues, blinking)
You often get snowed in here. Pretty romantic, but only when you’re in love.

Richard starts kissing Grace. She holds him off, gestures towards the kids’ room.

RICHARD
They’re sleeping like logs.

Richard starts undressing Grace, she stops resisting and joins in.

(38) INT. LODGE - NIGHT

SEX ECHOING THROUGH
THE CORRIDORS

The kids are not sleeping like logs. They are lying wide-eyed in their beds in the next room, listening to everything. Mia is clutching her Mama-Doll.

(39) INT. LODGE - NIGHT

The sex noises have stopped, peace and quiet have returned. Grady is sleeping in his little basket. His soft breathing is the only sound in the still of the night.

(40) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM – NIGHT

Richard, too, has fallen asleep. Only Grace lies there with her eyes wide open. She is staring at the cross on the wall, lit in ghostly moonlight.

After a while Grace gets up. She rummages in her handbag and takes out an orange pillbox. She glances in Richard's direction, to check whether he's asleep. Then she opens the pillbox. She takes two tablets at once with a gulp of water from a glass on her nightstand. Grace lies back down again.

In the dark, Grace watches the crucifix on the wall. After a while she gets up, decisively takes the crucifix off the wall and puts it back on the floor. A light mark remains on the wall, as if the aura of the crucifix has turned visible.

(41) INT. LODGE – MORNING

The next morning is grey and dreary. A little light is seeping through the windows of the lodge. Grace comes downstairs. She's dressed for winter. Round her shoulders dangle brand-new ice skates. She's pulling the hood of her winter jacket onto her head, but it won't quite fit.

GRACE
Richard?

No answer. Instead, Grady comes running and leaps happily. Grace looks around, no one there.

GRACE
Richard!?

She looks round the living room, no one here. Quiet. Only the TICKING of a clock. When Grace notices what kind of clock it is, she grins: an old-fashioned cuckoo-clock that looks out of place in the lodge. The likes of it would be much more fitting in an Austrian *Heimat*-movie.

She goes to the door. At the hat rack, she takes one of several hats, a red one, and pulls it on. She goes outside. Grady, too, rushes out. Grace whistles, Grady immediately comes running back to her.

(42) EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING

The sky is overcast, the sun hidden. The world seems monochrome and grey white. Grace heads to a small frozen lake that, so far, has lain hidden under piles of snow. Richard is pushing the snow away with a broom to make room for ice skating. Under all of this: not just ice but also motionless fish, apparently frozen beneath the surface.

Mia and Aiden skate skillfully on the cleared rink and through the snow. Mia is holding her Mama-Doll. At the sight of Grace, the kids suddenly freeze like statues.

Grace looks at them questioningly.

AIDEN
(coldly)
That's our Mama's hat.

Grace is startled and immediately pulls the hat off her head.

(43) EXT. FROZEN LAKE - MORNING

Grace has apparently never ice skated before and is stumbling about, at times she even falls down. A little further away, Aiden and Richard are having a snowball fight.

Mia, who is now wearing the red hat over her own, is playing with the Mama-Doll at the side of the lake. A mighty oak tree looms over the water. Not ice, but barely-frozen water surrounds the tree trunk.

Mia allows the doll to slide across the ice. The doll slides further and further. Suddenly she falls into the water with a splash.

MIA
(screams)

Mia kneels and crawls towards the hole. Mama-Doll floats helplessly on the water surface.

GRACE
Don't!

She stumbles, as fast as she can, towards Mia.

GRACE
(to Mia)
Stay here, I'll get her.

Slowly she crawls towards the hole on all fours. Once more, she turns around to Mia.

GRACE
You have to be careful...

CRACK!!!

Grace breaks through the ice with one jolt. She plunges down into the ice-cold water.

MIA
(cries out)

Richard now realizes what's happening and rushes over, Aiden follows. Mia, her mouth wide open, stares at the hole in the ice, its softly lapping waves.

Grace resurfaces. She tries to pull herself out of the hole in the ice, but she can't - the edges keep breaking off. Richard lies down flat across the ice.

RICHARD
(to Aiden)
Hold my feet!

AIDEN
(frightened and a little sheepish)
You'll fall in!

Richard ignores him and slides towards the hole on his stomach until he's able to reach Grace. Aiden and Mia's only option is to hold his feet tight and pull with all their might.

They manage to drag Richard - with Grace - out of the danger zone. Richard, Mia, and Aiden are breathing heavily from exhaustion and exertion, Grace is pale and shaking heavily.

(44) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Grace, wrapped in a blanket and still shaking, sitting on the sofa in front of the fireplace. Richard brings her tea from the kitchen. Through the window, the kids can be seen playing outside.

Richard looks worriedly at Grace but doesn't say anything. He rubs her back to warm her and kisses her hair. Then he returns to the kitchen. Once she is out of Richard's sight, she inconspicuously rummages in her handbag for her orange pillbox, hides it in her fist, gets up and walks wordlessly to the bathroom. Richard watches her go, worried.

(45) INT. LODGE / BATHROOM - MORNING

Grace turns on the water, gets out two pills, and takes them with a gulp of water. Richard suddenly comes in. He looks at the pillbox, concerned.

RICHARD
(surprised, and surprisingly serious)
I thought you weren't taking those anymore?

Grace seems to feel she's been caught red-handed.

GRACE
(almost snottily)
I thought you weren't my shrink anymore.

Richard looks at her earnestly.

RICHARD
(a little offended)
Hmh...

Both glare at each other silently for a moment. Richard glances at his watch.

RICHARD
I really need to get going. Today I've got a list of **this** many patients whose shrink I still am…
(after a brief pause)
Is it really alright if I leave you with the kids?

GRACE
(too quickly)
Sure. As long as I stay away from the ice. I'm from Mississippi, remember? The only ice I've ever known was in my Grandma's bourbon.

Richard doesn't seem too convinced by the laid-back tone, he watches her silently.

Grace touches his arm to reassure him.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(earnestly)
Richard, I've got this. It's just four days.

(46) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Richard standing in front of a safe in his bedroom, Grace at his side. Richard turns the combination lock.

RICHARD
1…2…3…4…5

GRACE
Impressive.

Richard doesn't react to the needling and opens the safebox. Inside is a 9mm automatic pistol. Richard pulls it out.

RICHARD
Ever use one?

Grace shakes her head, she is visibly intimidated by the weapon.

RICHARD
There’re bears up here. Most of the time they’re asleep, but when they wake up, they’re hungry. And I’ve seen what they can do.

He gestures at a lever on the side of the weapon.

RICHARD
Release...hold with both hands… aim… and...

He releases the trigger.

KLICK

RICHARD
Pow. Easy as pie.

Richard slides a whole magazine into the weapon. Then he secures it and puts it back in the safe.

(47) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - MORNING

The kids and Grace, with Grady in her arms, are all standing in the snow outside of the lodge. The sky is a grey white, no sun in sight. They wave at Richard, sitting in his SUV. He drives off, tapping a tune on the horn as a good-bye.

CAR HORN

For a very brief moment, Grace and the kids look like a real family. Then – from one moment to the other - the kids turn on their heels and disappear into the building. Grace remains behind, watching Richard go. She waves one last time, then, she’s all alone with the distant noises of the mountain. The howling wind is like an echo, eerie and unsettling. Even Grady whimpers. Grace pets him, kisses him. When he won’t stop yowling, she sets the dog down and slowly heads back towards the lodge.

(48) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

MUTED, QUIET MUSIC
(from the kids’ room on the first floor)

Grace, sitting pitifully alone, eating a slice of bread at the dining table in an empty living room. On the wall right across from her hangs a strangely antiquated oil painting: a somber depiction of the Virgin Mary with nothing merciful about her – menacingly, she stares down at Grace. After a while, Grace rises and sits at the other side of the table so she no longer has to look at the painting. Still she feels ill at ease. Grace rises again, takes the picture off the wall, turns it around, and leans it face-forward against the wall.

(49) INT. LODGE / HALL - MORNING

MUSIC
(from the kids' room)

Grace in front of the door to the kids' room, from where music is emanating. Grace tries to enter, but then, to her surprise, she finds the door locked.

Grace knocks on the door.

GRACE
I'm going to do some chores. You coming?

MIA
(through the closed door)
In a minute.

(50) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NOON

Grace puts up a chain of Christmas tree lights across the fireplace.

Again and again Grace glances towards the kids, hoping they'll help her. But they won't:

Aiden is sitting in front of the TV, watching a horror movie on DVD – EXORCIST 2: THE HERETIC. Mia, feeding her sea monkeys, keeps glancing at the movie.

Grace is irritated, but keeps on decorating.

(51) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NOON

Later. Mia's face reflected on the orb of a Christmas tree ornament out of a box of decorations. She points her tongue at herself. The television is turned off, Aiden has disappeared. Mia is playing more than actually helping. Grace seizes the moment to have a conversation with Mia.

GRACE
What do you want for Christmas?

MIA
A dog. But I'll never get one!

GRACE
I always wanted one, too… and never got one. I never got anything when I was a girl...

Mia looks at her questioningly.

MIA
You were that bad!?

GRACE
(laughing, shakes her head)
No, there's just nothing about presents in the Bible. And my father… my father was all about whatever the Bible said. And he was very strict...

MIA
But you've got a dog now?

GRACE
(laughing, shaking her head)
One I gave myself when I finally moved out...

Grace grows silent and continues to hang Christmas ornaments. Mia watches her as she does. Suddenly she notices a scar in the middle of Grace's right palm, then notices that the left palm is scarred in the same spot - almost like the wounds of Christ. Grace notices Mia's stare. Mia quickly looks away. She's visibly embarrassed. Into the silence:

MIA
Would you like to see our present for Papa? We made it ourselves…!

Grace, pleased, nods. Mia runs up the stairs to get the present from her room.

(52) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Mia inserts a DVD. Grace has sat down in a waiting position on the sofa. A series of old amateur video shots flicker across the screen , grainy, frequently out of focus, just like at the start of the movie.

Only this time, the images show a happy Aiden, Mia, Richard, and a younger Laura: the four are eating a turkey in winter coats, snow is swirling around them, they laugh.

Aiden is receiving an award in a gym, Laura and Mia applauding.

Mia is standing with the remote control in hand, eyes fixed more on Grace than on the video. The montage ends with a song Laura singing a Christmas song. Grace appears struck, she suddenly appears sad.

LAURA (O.S.)
(on the screen)
Santa Baby, a fifty-four convertible too... Light Blue... I'll wait up for you, dear Santa baby, so hurry down the chimney tonight...

(53) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM / STAIRCASE / HALL - NIGHT

Grace draws the curtains in the kitchen. Outside in the dark, a storm howls; uncanny shadows of dark branches are cast against the curtains.

Grace is alone in the living room, it seems late. She turns off the lights in the kitchen and walks up the stairs.

Up in the hallway she sees, to her surprise, a faint light coming from under the door of the kids' room.

(54) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Quietly she opens the door to the kids' room. They are both asleep. Grace looks around to find the source of the light - strangely, it's coming from a closet. Quietly, she approaches and sees: it's a type of shrine, built by the kids for their mother. The red hat is there, the Mama-Doll, and a Bible. Two candles are burning beside it. Grace looks irritated but also a little touched. She briefly glances at the sleeping kids. Then she holds a hand behind the flame, carefully blows it out and leaves the room.

What she can't see: Aiden's eyes are wide open, watching her.

(55) INT. LODGE / BATHROOM - NIGHT

A steamed-up shower door. The shape of a naked female body behind it. The shower door opens. Grace comes out of the shower, clouds of steam follow her. She takes a towel and starts drying herself.

Steam fogs the mirror, but not evenly: a heart shape grows visible on the glass, one that someone smeared on the mirror long ago, the outline now lighter than the rest. Beside the heart, stick figures appear as well as the word “Mom” with a smiley.

Grace hesitates for a moment, then uses her lower arm to wipe off the foggy mirror and its drawings. She finishes drying herself off, takes a tub of body lotion and starts applying it to her body. We see Grace from behind as she massages her stomach in a circling movement, her waist seems somehow reddened. She rubs the body lotion on more, more, and more. She gets another blob of lotion, raises her head briefly - and suddenly starts: Aiden, who has apparently been watching from the door, is staring back from the mirror. Their eyes meet. Embarrassed, Aiden disappears.

Grace quickly closes the door and returns to applying the lotion. Only now do we see that it is deep, uneven scars she is applying lotion to. Like a red belt of thorns, they run across her midriff.

(56) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outside, a storm is howling. Grace is lying in her bed. She’s fallen asleep, but is tossing and turning restlessly.

(57) INT. LODGE - NIGHT

The storm keeps on raging. The desolate rooms of the house, lit by moonlight. Everything and everyone is sleeping. Just not Grady. Statue-like, he sits in the dark of night with his ears perked, alert, listening.

FOOTSTEPS, WHEEZING
AND BREATHING; DOORS
OPEN AND SHUT (O.S.)

It sounds as though someone is creeping through the house. The noises are eerie in the quiet of the night.

(58) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM – EARLY MORNING

GRADY BARKING

The next morning. The sky outside is grey. Grace opens her eyes. To her surprise she isn’t lying in bed but on the floor, on the rug in front of the bed. The blanket by her side. She sits up, looks around in confusion. Then she gets up and pulls on a dressing gown.

(59) INT. LODGE / HALL / BATHROOM - MORNING

Grace, in her dressing gown, sleepily walks along the hallway to the bathroom. All doors, including the one to the kids' room, are closed. She enters the bathroom - and jumps back in shock: the bathroom mirror is covered with countless red crosses, it is virtually besmeared. Stunned, Grace stares at them for several moments. Then, as if on auto-pilot, she starts wiping the crosses off, then stops:

GRACE
Mia!? Aiden!?

No reaction. After a while.

GRACE
Mia!!

Finally, Mia pushes her sleepy face through the bathroom door.

GRACE
(rather harshly)
What's this supposed to mean?!

Grace gestures at the crosses. Mia glances at the smears and fiercely shakes her head.

GRACE
(strictly)
Say something...

MIA
I, we, we didn't do that...

GRACE
Well the mirror wouldn't have gotten up and smeared itself like this, right?

Mia hesitates. She doesn't dare reply.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...and you're going to clean this up...

MIA
(upset)
But **you** were in the bathroom last night!

Grace starts, and then shakes her head fiercely.

GRACE
(looks at her questioningly)
Me?

MIA
I saw you walking around in the hallway.

GRACE
(defensively)
Nonsense. Definitely not.

Grace tries to hide her unease. Her face, reflected in the mirror, is studded with red crosses.

(60) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Grace enters the bedroom. She lifts her blanket off the floor and sees something glinting beneath the bed. She bends over - and finds an opened, red lipstick. The tip is completely flattened, it looks as though someone had written with it.

KNOCK AT BEDROOM
DOOR

Grace is a little startled, hides the lipstick quickly in her fist, just as Mia opens the door.

MIA
I really didn’t do it...

GRACE
(too quickly)
It’s alright... don’t worry.

Mia nods and leaves the bedroom. Grace opens her fist, now smeared red. She seems a little worried.

(61) INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Grace opens the medicine cabinet and swallows two pills from the orange pillbox. In doing so, she looks thoughtfully at the red crosses. Then she sprays some glass cleaner on the mirror, wipes them off.

(62) INT. LODGE / FOYER - AFTERNOON

Grace carries a small bowl of dog food into the hall, Grady jumps at her happily and starts to eat. She squats down beside him and pets him.

Suddenly Mia is at her side. She’s holding out a pack of AMBIEN to Grace, seemingly as a peace offering.

MIA
Grace? You can have these. Mom used them. When she couldn’t sleep...

Grace shakes her head.

GRACE
Thanks, sweetie! But I’ve got to look after you. I shouldn’t be sleeping like a rock.

Mia nods and leaves the foyer, pills in hand.

Grace pets Grady one last time, then she gets up and returns to the living room. Grady wants to join her. But Grace puts him back in his basket.

GRACE
(tenderly)
You can’t come with me, I’m sorry. Stay. Stay.

And Grady stays.

(63) INT. LODGE / KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

SHOTS AND SCREAMS

Aiden is sitting on the sofa, playing a horror shooter game.

GRACE (O.S.)
(drowning out the game)
I'm going to make myself a sandwich... Would you like one?

Aiden doesn’t react.

GRACE (O.S.)
Aiden?

AIDEN
I can make my own.

Grace hesitates, unsure how to react, then picks up the remote and switches off the television. Aiden stares at her aggressively.

GRACE
I think it's time we had a talk.

Aiden remains silent.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Maybe start with why you're giving me all this attitude.

AIDEN
(shrugging)

Hormones probably... Difficult age.

GRACE
Hormones...
(beat)
Well that might explain why you were spying on me last night.

Aiden looks down, embarrassed. Grace frowns guiltily.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's not a big deal...

(64) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Aiden rather sheepishly brings a cup of hot cocoa from the kitchen: for Grace, who is sitting beside Mia on the sofa. Grace is visibly delighted over the kind gesture of apology.

GRACE
You don’t want any?

AIDEN
(glancing at Mia)
Too much sugar...

Grace smiles, Aiden joins them on the sofa.

MIA
I’m cold...

Grace is worried, since Mia is already wrapped in a heavy blanket. A fire is flickering in the fireplace. She feels her forehead: all normal.

MIA
I’m cold...

AIDEN
I’m getting the gas heater out of the cellar...

MIA
(overly grateful)
Thank you!

The three watch a horror film. THE THING. Grace is frightened: keeps getting spooked, jumping, much to Mia’s amusement.

GRACE
(explains her fright)

Up until I was 17, I never watched any movies at all. And after that only stuff with Heath Ledger.

MIA
Who?
(when Grace doesn’t respond)
We watch horror movies all the time. On account of the cathartic effects. That’s what Dad says...

Grace grins.

The (rather antiquated) gas heater makes strange noises. Aiden notices that Grace looks worried.

AIDEN
Don’t worry. That thing always sounds like that...

They continue watching the movie. When the Thing jumps out of its skin again, Grace jumps again and lets out a small cry.

GRACE
Can we please watch something else?

Later. Dwarves singing. A Disney movie is on. Grace has fallen asleep in front of the TV. White letters appear, informing us that the TV will turn itself off in the next ten seconds if no function is activated. And that’s exactly what happens.

Then: silence, darkness, empty rooms of the Lodge.

FOOTSTEPS, CREAKING
(O.S.)

It almost sounds like the previous night, and it sounds very eerie. Grady, too, has awoken. He gets up, perks his ears, whines gently. He’s not entirely at ease.

(65) INT. LODGE / HALL - EVENING

Suddenly we see what’s causing the noise: a shadowy figure can be seen stepping out of the darkness and walking along the hallway. It’s Grace, her gaze rigid and absent.

A door in the hallway opens, Mia’s face peeks out. She freezes and stares, wide-eyed: the creepy, almost ghostly Grace doesn’t seem to notice her. She simply walks past Mia and goes around the corner. Mia stares after her.

(66) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - NIGHT

Grace wakes shivering on the frozen lake, lit by pale moonlight. Grace takes a few moments to gather her bearings and tries to get up. She props herself on the icy surface, beneath her the frozen fish we saw earlier.

Grace can hardly believe her eyes: suddenly one of the fish starts to wiggle. It swims away, dives down. Grace gets closer to the ice. A second fish frees itself from its congealed state. Suddenly, she breaks in with a jolt.

CRACKING,
SPLINTERING ICE

(67) INT. UNDER WATER - NIGHT

Grace can't breathe. She sinks deeper and deeper into the dark water. From below, out of the dark, a hand suddenly appears, reaching for Grace. The hand belongs to the bald priest who we know from the start of the movie. He pulls Grace under water, deeper and deeper; Grace flails her arms in panic and still keeps sinking further into the dark. Suddenly a wooden church emerges at the bottom of the lake. This is where the priest is dragging her, but Grace is struggling for her life. Bells chime, creating waves of water instead of sound. Above Grace floats a lifeless boy's body. Pale as a corpse he floats through the dark as if through outer space. The face of the boy bears the port wine stain.

(68) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Grace lurches up from her sleep. It's bitterly cold, half dark. She's lying rolled into a blanket on the living room rug. The kids are entwined on the sofa. All are still wearing the previous day's clothes. Grace shivers. Her breath is a puff of icy air, that's how weirdly cold it's gotten in the room. The fire has gone out. Grace gets up and tries turning on the light. Nothing. She tries again. Again nothing. The lamp isn't working.

Grace heads to the kitchen, tries the light switch in here. Again nothing. Grace curses. She pulls back the curtains for more light. But outside the windows, thick snowflakes are drifting by. Fog lies thickly beyond swirling white. Hardly any light gets through this mass of snow and fog. All shapes are obscured. It looks almost unreal.

MIA (O.S.)
(screaming)

Grace is startled, turns around and sees Mia who, totally bleary, pale, and shivering, is standing in front of her glass of sea monkeys. All the sea monkeys are frozen.

MIA
That's impossible. It's only been a night!?

Grace briefly consoles her and then wakes Aiden.

GRACE
The power's out. Can you check the generator?

Aiden is totally disoriented for a moment, stretches.

AIDEN
How late is it anyway?

Grace gets her phone out and checks it.

GRACE
No battery. Check yours…

Aiden pulls his phone out of his pocket.

AIDEN
(shocked)
Mine's out too. I was at 80 percent last night...

Grace glances around the room.

GRACE
Where's the gas heater? Have you moved it?

Aiden shakes his head.

GRACE
Well it can't just get up and walk away.
(after a brief pause, says sternly)
Aiden...!?

Aiden shrugs his shoulders.

AIDEN
It's got to be around here somewhere...

Grace looks around. Finally notices that not only the heater is missing – there's no trace of yesterday's Christmas ornaments, either. Instead, the Virgin Mary, who Grace had taken off the wall, is back in her spot, staring sternly and tauntingly down at her. Strange.

GRACE
Is this some kind of joke? 'Cause I don't think it's funny.

She looks at Aiden.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(almost screaming)
Aiden!?

Aiden shakes his head.

AIDEN
I didn't do anything ...

MIA
(shouts over from the kitchen)
Grace! Grace!

Mia stares into the dark refrigerator: completely empty. Bewilderment in Grace's face. But she manages to stay composed.

GRACE
(pulls herself together as much as possible; glaring at Aiden)
Apparently, **somebody** here really wants to starve…
(beat)
Listen. You've had your fun. Now, I'm going to go upstairs for a moment and when I return, all the food will be right back where it's supposed to be and everything else will be, too. Okay?

She turns out and stomps up the stairs.

MIA
(calls after her)
Grace?

But Grace only shakes her head and doesn't answer. The kids stare after her, watch as she disappears at the top of the stairs and goes into the bathroom.

(69) INT. LODGE / BATHROOM - MORNING

Grace slowly breathes in and out to calm herself. Then she opens the bathroom medicine cabinet, where she stores her pills - and stares into a gaping emptiness. No sign of her meds. Frantically, Grace rips open other drawers, nothing. Even the toothbrushes have disappeared, all toiletries are gone. Grace's panic rises, she finally loses her composure, storms out of the bathroom.

(70) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Grace rushes downstairs.

GRACE
(right up in the kids' faces)
Now you've really done it. The line's been crossed! Where are my pills!?

She seems barely recognizable, menacing and hysterical. Mia, panicking, hides behind Aiden.

AIDEN
(intimidated at first)
We didn't do anything...

GRACE
(screams)
Keep your bullshit to yourself! Where're my pills and all the other things? They've got to be somewhere...

Mia starts to cry.

AIDEN
(a little intimidated)
...maybe ask yourself? You're the one who's creeping through the house all night long!

Grace is briefly disturbed, then manages to suppress the feeling.

GRACE
Alright then... I'll go find my things.
(looking Aiden right in the eye)
Starting with your room.

She heads up the stairs.

(71) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Grace enters the kids' bedroom and looks around. She kneels down to check under the bed. Nothing there. Meanwhile, Aiden and Mia have joined her.

Graces glances at the closet, then at the two kids. Triumphantly, she opens the closet door.

Then they all freeze in surprise: they gape at the empty closet. All clothes are gone. Even the shrine for the kids' mother is gone. With the hat, the doll, the photo. Bewilderment.

MIA
(whining)
My doll, where's my doll...?

Grace stares, stunned, glancing back and forth between the kids and the closet.

AIDEN
(to Grace)
We might have more luck looking in **your** room...

Aiden has only just uttered the words, but he's already left the bedroom, hurrying towards Grace's.

GRACE
(surprised)
What?... Aiden!... come back... you certainly won't...

She rushes down the hall after Aiden. But he is already disappearing into her room.

(72) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Grace enters the bedroom and sees Aiden opening her closet.

GRACE
(screaming, almost hysterical)
Aiden, are you completely...

Grace falls silent. She sees Aiden staring in consternation into her closet. Only now does she notice that this one, too, is completely empty: the presents as well as her clothes are missing. It's unbelievable.

Wordlessly Aiden leaves the room. Grace is alone.

In disbelief, almost defeated, she sinks down onto the bed. What's going on? A few seconds pass.

Weakly, she glances under the bed: nothing. Then she pulls the nightstand drawer open: inside, only Richard and Laura stare back at her, they are smiling, almost as if they were taunting her. Grace angrily bangs the drawer shut. She breathes deeply. Then she gets up, heads to the door, calls out.

GRACE
Aiden?! Mia!

No reaction. She turns and heads back into the room. Her gaze falls on the window, between the curtains. Something irks Grace. She approaches the window, draws the curtains apart: Loads of red crosses blotch the window pane, just like last night on the bathroom cabinet. Grace' distress deepens.

She looks at the spot on the wall from which she took the crucifix. It's back in its place, just like the Virgin Mary in the living room. She looks back over to the red painted crosses. She draws her hand across one cross, as if to wipe it away – and sees red lipstick underneath her fingernail.

MIA
Yes?

Mia's standing in the room, Grace is startled, quickly pulls the curtains shut.

GRACE
I wanted to... I don't know, I didn't mean it...

Mia nods hesitantly.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I don't know what's going on here, Mia... but... no matter who's behind this, we're going to stick this out together. We'll make the best out of this until your dad gets back, okay?

Mia nods, not entirely convinced.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We can do this...
(she nods as if to confirm what's been said)
Alright. I'll be down in a minute. We'll try to find something to eat...

Mia leaves the room. Grace waits for a moment. She quietly closes the door behind the girl.

Then she heads to the window and starts wiping away the crosses with a pillow case.

She throws the grimy pillowcase in the closet, is about to close the closet door, but stops. The crucifix. Stubbornly she takes it down and stores it in the closet as well. Then she locks the closet, almost like she's afraid the crucifix might run away.

(73) INT. LODGE / BASEMENT - MORNING

Grace, armed with a flashlight in an otherwise pitch dark cellar. At a loss, she presses the generator's buttons. The signals point to zero.

GRACE
Shit!

Then Grace lights up the room with the beam of her flashlight, looks around the cellar. She searches under shelves, opens a metal trunk: hibernating upholstery for deck chairs, but none of the missing items. Grace curses silently, turns back to the shelves. She takes a few cans, cookies, and jam. As well as several old pairs of green rubber boots. She goes back upstairs.

(74) INT. LODGE / KITCHEN - MORNING

Grace in the kitchen. She gets a pot to fill with water. She twists the faucet, but nothing comes out. She keeps turning, still nothing. Anger rises in her again, she grunts, pulls herself together.

Grace opens one of the windows. Icy wind comes in, beating against her. She pulls a heap of snow off the window ledge into a pot and closes the window again.

(75) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Grace carries the pot of snow over to the fireplace, where a fire is already flickering. Mia watches in astonishment at how practical Grace is.

GRACE
(trying to improve the mood)
There are advantages to a very simple childhood. I'm pretty good at surviving.

A smile flits across her face. Mia nibbles on some of the found cookies.

MIA
(with a mixture of innocence and worry)

Is the thing with the pills very bad?

A brief darkness crosses Grace's features, but she quickly shakes it off:

GRACE
(dry and quietly ironic)
Nope, nope. You might just have to put me in a straightjacket.

Mia stares with wide eyes and an open mouth. Grace starts to laugh.

GRACE
Everything's okay, sweetie! I was kidding!

Aiden returns from the cellar, cursing.

AIDEN
(to Grace)
The fucking generator isn't working. No idea why.
(bitterly)
We can forget about power for the time being.

Grace seems visibly concerned.

GRACE
How far to the next town?

AIDEN
(even more bitter)
17 miles. Pointless without a car, in this storm.

They are silent. Into the silence:

MIA
(innocently)
Where's Grady?

Grace is embarrassed that she herself hasn't notice that her dog has gone missing.

GRACE
(whistles between two fingers like a pro)

She waits confidently. Nothing.

GRACE
(whistles again)

Still, Grady doesn’t come. Grace is worried.

MIA
Maybe he’s outside?

GRACE
(panicking)
Grady can’t go outside by himself...
(calling)
Grady?! Grady?!
(after a brief pause)
Or did one of you leave the door open?

Mia and Aiden shake their heads vigorously. Grace leaps up and storms towards the door.

GRACE (CONT’D)
(panicking)
Grady?!

(76) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - NOON

Fog and whirling snow. One can barely see one’s hand in front of one’s face.

MIA, AIDEN, GRACE
(O.S.)
Grady!! Grady!!

Only the storm howls in reply. Mia, Aiden, and Grace are wrapped in blankets, wearing rubber boots and wandering through the thick snow, one can barely see a foot ahead, the search seems pointless. Still, the three make their way through the cold. Mia is screaming with a face reddened by exhaustion and cold.

MIA
Grady!!

(77) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Back at the house. Mia is quaking on the sofa, wrapped in blankets. Grace is at her side, rubbing her back for warmth. Aiden at the counter, searching the cupboard for food. Mia is silent, seems exhausted.

MIA
(feebly, into oppressive silence)
I want Papa.

GRACE
(tries comforting her)

It'll be fine, sweetheart... I promise... Everything'll be fine.

AIDEN
(aggressively at Grace)
How can you say that? You have no idea it'll be fine! We don't even know what's going on here, do we?

(78) EXTERIOR – LODGE / EVENING

Outside, the heavy snow storm is still ongoing, the wind howling eerily. Grace opens the door and sets out a bowl with improvised dog food: beans and cookie crumbs. She stares briefly into the dark.

AIDEN (O.S.)
Grace!

(79) INT. LODGE / KITCHEN - EVENING

AIDEN
Grace!

Grace returning to the living room.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
...my phone's working!

Aiden runs towards her. His phone is lit up. A shimmer of hope. But in the next moment, Aiden stops short: the automatic date shows January 9th. He manages to just barely show Grace – as she rushes towards him - before the screen goes blank again. The phone is dead. Aiden looks at Grace, questioningly. Grace shakes her head in irritation.

GRACE
Impossible...

She has an idea, turns to the old cuckoo-clock on the living room wall. She gets close up to it and checks: even here, the tiny date says – January 9th. Grace is pensive, Aiden has joined her. He starts to say something, then falls silent again. Clearly this is difficult for him.

AIDEN
(halting and uncertain)
I... I dreamed last night that...
(he breaks off, starts anew)

...that the gas heater started smoking. We couldn't breathe. And... and all of us suffocated. Mia too... and you.

Aiden falters, he glances at Grace, appears more child-like than usual. Grace doesn't know how to deal with him.

Suddenly the cuckoo jumps out of the clock.

CUCKOO!!!
(Mini Jump Scare!)

Grace flinches, then laughs. She turns to Aiden, tries appeasing him with a joke.

GRACE
(to Aiden)
Clearly, I'm not the only one who could use meds.

(80) INTERIOR – LODGE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

In the living room, the glass with the sea monkeys has now thawed. The dead sea monkeys are floating on the water surface.

Grace and the kids are sitting at the dinner table with a pot of heated canned beans. Grace portions them out. They eat in silence, no one is particularly appreciative. The atmosphere is very tense.

(81) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - LATE EVENING

Mia lying in bed under several blankets, Grace standing beside her, a little lost; Mia is apparently saying her good night prayers.

MIA
(praying quietly and pleadingly)
...and protect my brother and Papa.
(glancing at Grace)
Make that we find Grady and that nothing happens to him... Amen.

Grace is visibly moved, she tenderly touches Mia's hair.

(82) INT. LODGE / BATHROOM – NIGHT

Grace in the dark bathroom, gazing at the open, empty medicine cabinet. She reaches in, runs her hands along the shelves, as if to make sure her pills aren't there somewhere. They aren't.

As Grace withdraws her hands she notices they are shaking. Grace must hold onto something to stay calm.

(83) INT. LODGE / GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MONOTONE HOWLING OF
THE WIND FROM
OUTSIDE

Grace lying in bed with open eyes, unable to sleep. She glances at the light outline of the crucifix on her wall, rubs the scars on her palms, as though they might be aching. The wind howls loudly. Or is it the wind? The wind's cries sound almost human. Grace listens closely to the still of the night. Nothing to be heard.

CRASHING NOISE
(O.S.)

Grace is startled when her bedroom door bangs open. It's Mia.

MIA
(frightened and unsettled)
I heard something...

Grace recovers from her fright and attempts to seem as calm as possible.

GRACE
What did you hear, sweetie?

Mia hesitates.

MIA
(whispers)
A voice.

(84) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace takes Mia back to her room and puts her to bed, gently petting her hair.

RATTLING NOISE

Coming from the window - apparently, the storm has torn it open. Grace goes to close it.

GRACE
Look sweetie, it wasn't a voice. That was just a window, that... that...

Grace falters, she suddenly seems concerned. Down below, in the snow surrounding the lodge, dozens of snow angels have assembled. Like an army. The flatly falling moonlight barely touches them and they thus appear as dark shadows, frightening, like snow demons. Grace quickly closes the curtains so that Mia won't notice.

GRACE
(hiding her own unease)
Sleep tight, Sweetie! Tomorrow everything'll be better.

(85) INT. LODGE / GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MONOTONOUS HOWLING
OF THE WIND OUTSIDE

Grace lying in bed with open eyes. Suddenly a voice cuts through the quiet. It is distinctly audible, a woman's voice howling through the night. Grace sits up. The voice is still there. Grace presses her hands to her ears, takes them away. Still, the voice. Grace overcomes her fears and gets up. She opens her bedroom door, hesitates, steps out into the hall.

(86) INT. LODGE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Grace in the dark hall. She stares down into the shadows, trying to make out the source of the singing voice. Suddenly everything goes completely quiet again. Grace's nose starts to bleed.

(87) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - DAWN

Grace, wrapped in blankets, goes around the house and looks out at the snowed-in snow angels who, in the blue light of dawn, appear hardly less demonic than the previous night. Grace seems pensive.

It's bitterly cold and practically windless. Grace stands outside the lodge, where Grady's improvised food bowl lies buried in snow. She brushes the snow away with her hand.

She notices traces of animal tracks leading towards the frozen lake. Whether these are Grady's paw prints or not is hard to tell.

Grace nevertheless follows the tracks and stops at the edge of the lake. The paw prints continue. She hesitates, looks around fearfully, then forces herself out onto the ice.

GRACE
Grady?

Nothing. Grace hardly dares go further. She turns to head back to the lodge.

She notices something strange: beneath a snowdrift, something is shimmering. It's red. Grace gets closer and starts to dig. A plastic flower peels itself out of the snow. She continues to dig. More and more flowers appear. It's completely absurd.

She then finds two find small stuffed animals and three grave candles in the snow. And then a photo showing Aiden and Mia, with a black ribbon attached to it. It looks like a little memorial. More distress.

AIDEN (O.S.)
Grace?

Startled, Grace crumples the things she dug up hastily and buries it in the show. She kicks an extra layer of snow over it.

(88) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Grace enters the lodge, she is visibly nervous and unsettled. Aiden, who has been standing at the window beside the door, apparently peering out, looks at her in astonishment.

GRACE
Up already?

AIDEN
(evading her question)
What were you doing?

GRACE
(lies, pulling off her boots)
Nothing. I went outside to look for Grady...I found tracks...but nothing...

Grace heads into the living room. Aiden gazes skeptically out the window. Something doesn't seem right to him. He pulls on rubber boots, prepares to go outside.

(89) INT. LODGE - AFTERNOON

Grace alone at the kitchen counter. She keeps trying to switch on her phone, the display flickers briefly and then darkens again. She curses quietly, the Virgin Mary gazes sternly down on her. Grace's hands shake, she holds them tightly.

She heads up the stairs, passes the kids' room, and hears Mia's voice. It sounds like she's on the phone. Grace stops, goes back to the door, listens.

MIA
Yeah... and we went sledding and it was so much fun... Yeah, and - Papa?... Hm.
(laughs)

Grace is irritated and pushes the door open wide. Mia is sitting on her bed, her back to the door. Frightened, she lets her phone sink the moment she hears the door, as though trying to hide it.

GRACE
(consternation, almost anger)
... your phone's working?...

Grace approaches Mia and pulls Mia's phone out of her hand.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...What?...

She stares at the screen. It's black. No signal, no battery. She looks questioningly at Mia, who looks back, frightened.

MIA
(stuttering)
...I... I just was playing...I wanted to... I'd... I want Papa.

Guilt can be seen in Grace's face. She returns to the phone.

(90) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mia, Aiden and Grace at the dinner table. Two plates are empty, only Mia's plate is full. She pushes it away.

MIA
(yammering)
I want my doll... and Papa.

The dead sea monkeys are still floating on the surface of the murky water. Slowly, they are starting to decay.

(91) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace is lying in bed, her eyes closed.

QUIET, INDISTINCT
NOISES (O.S.)

She opens her eyes, she clearly hasn't been sleeping. She waits to hear more. She doesn't hear anything, closes her eyes again.

SUDDEN LOUD AND
HEAVY RUMBLING
(O.S.)

Grace’s eyes fly open.

CREAKING, GROANING,
SUDDEN FOOTSTEPS
(O.S.)

It seems like someone is in the house. Grace is clearly afraid. She conquers her fear, quietly rises, thinks for a moment. Then she heads to the safe and removes Richard’s gun.

(92) INT. LODGE / HALL - NIGHT

Gun in one hand and flashlight in the other, Grace steps out into the dark hallway.

MORE NOISES
(hard to locate, but distinctly audible)

Grace listens, tries to decipher their origin. Gun out and holding her breath, she crouches downstairs, towards the living room. But nobody’s there.

Grace lets the beam of the flashlight wander through the kitchen, bearing the unbelievable fear of actually finding someone. But no one’s in the kitchen, either.

NOISES
(suddenly and distinctly coming from upstairs)

Grace is startled. She quickly climbs the stairs, listens, the noises are coming from Mia and Aiden’s room.

STRANGE CREAKING,
FOOTSTEPS FROM HEAVY
FOOTWEAR (O.S.)

Grace steps in front of the closed door, not daring to open it. Then she overcomes her fear.

(93) INT. LODGE / KIDS’ BEDROOM - NIGHT / MORNING

GRACE
(screaming)

A boy is dangling dead from one of the rafters - he’s hanged himself. Rhythmically, his lifeless body moves back and forth, rhythmically the rafter creaks and groans.

The boy’s eyes are bulging from their sockets, his tongue is hanging from his mouth, a noticeable port-wine stain runs across his face.

GRACE
Aaron!... Aaron!!...

A sudden flood of light, Grace is still standing in Mia’s and Aiden’s room, her hand is clutching Richard’s gun. Her eyes are open, and yet she seems to be asleep. She’s sleepwalking. Both kids are trying to shake her.

MIA AND AIDEN
(calling in agitation)
Grace!!! Grace!!!

Aiden pulls Grace’s arm, she starts flailing. With the barrel of the gun she hits Mia’s face, flinging her against the closet.

MIA
(yelps)

Aiden, too. Then Grace wakes, she seems frightened and confused. Grace’s eyes don’t seem to be in this world. It’s already the next morning. Mia, with a small laceration over her eye, glances at Grace uncertainly. A thin trickle of blood is running down her face, Grace stares at her in shock. Only then does she notice the gun in her hand. The hand is shaking. With a stunned look, she squats down on the floor, totally appalled by herself. Grace makes a decision:

GRACE
We’ve got to get out of here.

The kids stare at her, wide-eyed.

(94) INT. LODGE / KITCHEN - MORNING

Grace stuffs crackers and cookies into a bag, fills water into plastic bottles. Her hands are really shaking now - even more than back in the bathroom. Grace seems disconcerted by this.

Aiden comes down the stairs, sees that Grace is packing provisions.

AIDEN
(certain and confident)
We’re definitely not coming.

GRACE
Oh yes you are. No discussion.

AIDEN
Don’t you get it!? It’s totally pointless!

GRACE
I desperately need my pills. And we’ve got to call Richard. Pack your things!

Instead of a reply, Aiden draws out a photo. The same photo Grace buried under the snow: It shows Mia and Aiden, a black ribbon is attached to it.

Aiden stares at Grace. Grace is strangely quiet.

AIDEN
What do you think it means? And my dream about all of us dying?

GRACE
(after a brief beat)
You can’t be serious, Aiden? This is somebody’s stupid prank!
(another beat)
We’ve got to get going... or... we’ve got to get going.

(95) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Grace - clearly prepared for departure in boots and with a blanket across her shoulders - at the open safe that the pistol has been returned to. She is thinking. Finally she makes a decision, takes the gun and pushes it into her waistband.

(96) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - MORNING

Snow as far as the eye can see. The three set out. Grace is stomping ahead. Aiden, pulling an old wooden sled, behind her.

AIDEN
We’ll never make it to town! That’s crazy!

Grace ignores him. Mia attempts to keep up, but she’s clearly struggling.

GRACE
(to Mia)
Tread in my steps, it’ll be easier!

(97) EXT. SNOWY LANDSCAPE - NOON

The three figures are silhouettes against the dismal, overcast sky. They are toiling up a hill.

Icy wind is blowing in their reddened faces. Single snowflakes announce heavier snowfall, Aiden looks around, disconcerted.

Mia too seems to be despairing, she appears exhausted.

But Grace keeps urging the kids onwards, almost maniacally stomping through the knee-high snow.

(98) EXT. STEEP SLOPE - AFTERNOON

A steep slope. It is snowing fiercely. The three attempt to slide down the slope on the sled, but the snow is too deep. They keep getting stuck. Then the sled capsizes. Grace and the kids are lying in a snowdrift, they pick themselves up, all wet.

They toil up the next hill. Panting and heavy steps. Aiden is leading now and he is walking quicker. Grace hurries after him, turns around for Mia at a particularly steep spot to make sure all is right. She turns back around and starts: Aiden has disappeared from her line of vision.

AIDEN (O.S.)
(cries out)

Snow swirls.

GRACE
(worried)
Aiden!!

Snow and fog everywhere, and no trace of Aiden. Now Mia, too, has noticed his disappearance.

GRACE AND MIA
Aiden! Aiden!!

Grace and Mia are looking for Aiden. The snowfall is very heavy now, one couldn’t even make out one’s hand in front of one’s eyes.

GRACE
(with increasing despair)
Aiden!? Aiden!?!

Mia, too, starts to panic more and more. Grace tries to calm her.

GRACE
We'll find him, Sweetie!
(loudly)
Aiden!?!

No reply. Only the howl of the wind.

MIA
(quickly)
Shh. I heard something!

Grace listens up, can't make anything out, shakes her head, then Mia takes her by the hand and drags her through the fog - still no trace of Aiden. Until Grace finally hears a voice calling from afar.

AIDEN
(weakly and from quite a distance)
Here! Here!

GRACE
Aiden!

Both start to run, through the falling snow and thick fog.

AIDEN
Here!!

But now Aiden's voice, strangely, seems to come from another direction; it's almost lost in the fog and snow. Mia, still clutching Grace's hand, drags her onwards in a panic, further and further into the fog to find Aiden. Despair. Finally, and it seems to have taken forever: a shadow.

MIA
Aiden!

Mia runs towards him. Aiden seems unhurt, but he is completely soaked.

Aiden pants, exhausted, Grace wants to give him water. With stiff fingers, she pulls the bottles out of the bag, but the water inside is frozen. Grace checks the other bottles - all frozen. Only now does it hit her. There's no point. They have to go back.

(99) EXT. SNOWY LANDSCAPE IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - EVENING

Grace drags the sled with Mia on it, both kids are shivering with cold. Grace coughs and sweats, her eyes flicker, still, she won't allow herself to rest. Completely frozen and exhausted, the three reach the lodge. It's already dark.

(100) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mia is crouching at the fireplace, freezing; she’s stuffing the remains of the cookies into her mouth, a fire is already crackling in front of her. Aiden is totally exhausted. He is lying on the sofa, pale with cold.

Grace sets a pot with snow onto the fire. Then she tries opening a can of beans to heat up. Her fingers are clammy, she can’t get the can to open. She curses soundlessly and sets down the unopened can near the fire.

(101) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The fire has burned down, Mia has apparently gone to sleep. Grace goes to sit with Aiden on the sofa. Her movements are strangely slow and rigid, almost as though she were padded. Both are quiet for a while.

AIDEN
How would we know..?

Grace looks at him questioningly.

AIDEN (CONT’D)
If we were dead... How would we know?

GRACE
We're not dead.

AIDEN
How d'you know?

GRACE
Because it doesn't make sense! Because I'm sitting here talking to you..! Also I'm tired and I'm hungry and my feet feel like they're on fire!

AIDEN
Maybe that's what it's like. For us anyway. It doesn't make sense because it doesn't have to.

GRACE
Well call me naive, but I always figured Heaven would be a little more...

AIDEN
(interrupting)
Who says we're in Heaven..?

Grace laughs, but her laughter sounds like despair. A long silence between the two.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
We're stuck here... Wendy should have come by with firewood long ago and...and... What about the photo with the black ribbon? And the grave candles? What do you think it means? It's as though... as though we were being punished. We're... we're...
(he falters)

GRACE
...in purgatory. Is that what you're trying to say?

Grace laughs again, this time however almost soundlessly. Then she shakes her head as if to herself.

(102) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aiden's fallen asleep in front of the warm fireplace. He still looks like he's freezing. Grace drapes another blanket over him. Suddenly she thinks she can hear a voice, louder and more pronounced than before. It's Laura's voice.

LAURA
(quietly, unreal, und eerie)
Santa Baby, a fifty-four convertible too... Light Blue... I'll wait up for you, dear Santa baby, so hurry down the chimney tonight...

Grace first holds her ears closed, then takes them away. Still, the voice. Grace rises and follows the singing, it seems to be coming from above, Grace heads up the stairs.

(103) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

LAURA (CONT'D)
(singing)
Think of all the fun I've missed
Think of all the fellas that I haven't kissed.
Next year I could be also good
If you'll check off my Christmas list.

Grace looks into the kids' room. Mia's sitting on her bed, looking at her.

MIA

(astonished)
You can hear it too?

Grace nods.

MIA (CONT'D)
It's Mama.

The voice is singing ghostly in the dark. It's eerie.

Grace kneels on the ground in front of Mia. She folds her hands and starts to pray, praying against her fear.

GRACE
Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus...

Mia, too, kneels beside Grace, she folds her hands and joins in the prayer. Both grow louder and louder, as though they are trying to drown out the eerily singing voice.

GRACE AND MIA
...Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of death. Amen.

(104) INT. LODGE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Dawn. Grace is back in her room. She fetches the wooden crucifix out of the closet and puts it back up on the wall. She kneels before it and starts to pray.

GRACE
(earnestly and wholeheartedly)
Heavenly father, forgive me, forgive me for losing my faith and lapsing! Forgive that I no longer go to your church, the house of God. Forgive my sins, that I abandoned my father, that I sinned and doubted you. I will repent and bring sacrifices for the sins I have committed. Oh Lord.
(She rubs the scars in the palms of her hands)
I ask you: give me strength to find the right way to protect these children who were entrusted into my care. Give me a sign, for you are the light of this world, for you can do anything...

LOUD SLAMMING DOOR
(O.S.)

Grace is startled.

(105) INT. LODGE / HALL - MORNING

Grace comes out into the hallway, she looks around.

GRACE
Hello? Hello?

No response, only further noises in the living room. Meanwhile, Mia and Aiden have come out of their rooms as well. Grace heads downstairs with a mixture of fear and hope. Suddenly, to Grace's surprise and relief: Wendy, the girl from the gas station, is standing there, about to set two flowers on the sofa.

GRACE
(breathing a sigh of relief)
Wendy!

But strangely, Wendy doesn't hear her. She just keeps staring sadly at the flowers, then puts a sheet of paper on the couch side table.

GRACE
Wendy!?

Again, no reaction. Wendy makes the sign of the cross, as though Grace were air, and gets ready to leave the house. Grace seems extremely distressed. Wendy has almost reached the door, but turns around and gazes back into the room as if in a final farewell.

GRACE
(properly screaming)
Wendy!!

Aiden and Mia join in the shouting.

GRACE, MIA, AIDEN
Wendy, Wendy!!

Wendy however does not seem to hear or see them. Instead, she opens the door and heads out. As if this were a signal, Grace breaks out of her torpor and lunges after Wendy. But Wendy has already locked the door behind her. Grace bangs against the door, trying to make herself heard, and finally lets go, searching for keys in a panic and finding them.

But by the time she has opened the door and gone through it, there's no trace of Wendy to be seen. Grace runs after her nevertheless, without shoes, barefoot in the snow. Again and again she calls Wendy's name - no reply. It's like she's vanished into thin air.

(106) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - MORNING

Grace keeps on running, tears are starting to stream down her cheeks. Barefoot, she stumbles about, a lonely spot in the icy landscape. Then she falls on her knees, head towards the sky, her hands folded as if in prayer.

(107) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Aiden and Mia stare at the piece of paper Wendy left next to the flowers, they look totally shocked.

Just then Grace enters, shaking with cold. Aiden looks at her detachedly.

AIDEN
I was right.

Aiden shows Grace the paper. It's a church bulletin, dating to the 9th of January, the announcement of a funeral service. Photos of Grace and the children underneath an obituary about a tragedy in the mountains, caused by a defective gas heater.

GRACE
(screams aggressively, like a maniac)
Stop this at once! This is bullshit! Go to your room!

Aiden laughs in despair.

AIDEN
Have you gone crazy? We're in purgatory and you're grounding me?

Without a warning, Grace pulls Aiden by his hair.

GRACE
Will you stop scaring your sister. Go to your room.

Mia really seems to be filled with fear. Afraid of Grace, who seems totally changed and jerks Aiden's hair again.

AIDEN
(muffled by pain)

Ok...ok.

Grace lets go, she goes completely still. Aiden stumbles up the stairs.

AIDEN
(walking, stubbornly)
Just wait… I'll show you.

Grace ignores him.

(108) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Grace picks up the church bulletin Wendy brought. In a mixture of anger and despair, she throws it in the trash along with the flowers.

MIA (O.S.)
(in heightened panic)
Grace!!! Grace!!!

Mia's panicked screams cut through from upstairs and yank Grace out of her trance. Grace wipes away her tears and runs up the stairs.

UNCOMFORTABLE,
SNAPPING NOISE
(from kids' room)

MIA
(screams)

(109) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Grace tears the door open to the kids' room, what she sees would make her scream, if only she could: Aiden is dangling from the ceiling. He's hung himself on one of the rafters, just like Grace's brother in the previous night's dream. Mia is standing beside him in dumb shock. Grace stares at him with wide open eyes.

Suddenly Aiden raises his head, Grace finally screams.

GRACE
(screams)

Aiden looks her right in the eye; a completely crazy sight.

AIDEN
(calmly and almost tenderly)
You see, we can't die, we're already dead. We're caught in purgatory.

Grace places her hand on her mouth and stumbles backwards from the room, she can still hear Aiden speaking through the door.

AIDEN (O.S.)
We've got to confess to our sins so we can go to heaven. You too, Grace…!

(110) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NOON

Grace stumbles through the living room in a daze. Her shocked gaze meets the dark eyes of the Virgin Mary, still staring at her reproachfully from the heavy picture frame.

Grace runs towards the painting, falls to her knees.

GRACE
Mother of God in heaven, please, help me! Please, Mother, protect me... Why did you leave? Mother?

She starts shaking the image, then pulls it off the wall.

GRACE
You left me all alone...
(Grace cries out like a beast)

She throws the painting of the Virgin on the fire.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(screaming loudly, inhumanly)

Grace storms out of the lodge, barefoot as she is.

The face of the Virgin Mary blisters and colors itself darker and darker, finally going up in flames.

(111) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - NOON

GRACE (O.S.)
(continues to scream, her screams cut through, muted, to the kids' room)

Aiden meanwhile has freed himself of the rope. He and Mia are looking out the window, they see Grace kicking at the snow angels in front of the lodge. Again and again she screams, as if she has lost her senses completely.

(112) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The kids are sitting on the floor of their bedroom, it's dark now, the screams have stopped. Aiden heads to the window, he looks outside, Mia joins him.

Grace is crouching lifelessly in the snow. Only after a while does Aiden notice Grace clutching something white and stiff.

MIA
Grady!

And really, Grace is holding her dead dog, whom she has apparently found. Mia looks shocked, and a moment later she is about to run out of the room. But Aiden holds her back.

AIDEN
Don’t.

MIA
...it was my fault...

Tears fill her eyes.

AIDEN
...we didn’t mean to. Something like that can...

MIA
But I wasn’t careful...

Mia tears herself free and runs out.

AIDEN
(hissing to himself)
Fuck.

(113) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - AFTERNOON

Mia storms out into the open. The sight of Grace stops her:

She’s crouching on the ground in the snow, gently rocking back and forth. In her arms Grady, stiffly frozen, whom she is gently and mindlessly pressing to her chest like a baby. She is crying quietly.

Mia slowly approaches Grace, her eyes are filled with tears.

After a while she manages to get hold of herself.

MIA
(with a soft, unusually thin voice)
Grace...

But Grace doesn’t seem to hear.

MIA (CONT’D)
(starts to cry)
Grace...I’m so...I’m so sorry...about Grady...

From upstairs, from the window of the kids' room, Aiden looks down on the scene. His face is dark.

Grace seems to be looking through Mia, as though she can't hear what Mia is saying. She rocks Grady over and over.

MIA
We opened the door and... Grady just suddenly got out. We couldn't find him... we're so sorry!
(she weeps)

Grace doesn't react, just keeps on silently rocking her dog.

Now Aiden comes out of the house. Mia looks at him imploringly, Aiden joins them. He seems at a loss.

AIDEN
(after a brief pause, to Mia)
Should we bury him?

Grace looks at him questioningly, as though she were just grasping what's being said. She shakes her head. Tears run down her cheeks. She turns back to her dog. Mia takes her hand and tries to get her to stand up and go inside. But Grace won't move from her spot. She starts murmuring a prayer. Mia gives her brother a desperate look.

(114) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Aiden and Mia are sitting in their room, they keep watching Grace, who is still kneeling in the snow. Dusk is falling.

MIA
(her voice is trembling)
She'll freeze to death.

(115) INT. LODGE / BASEMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

The kids push a trunk to the side. Beneath it, a wooden door to a small cellar. Inside: the heater, clothing, food. Even the shrine the kids built for their mother. Aiden pulls out a winter jacket and food, Mia takes the Mama-Doll and clutches her tight.

(116) INT. LODGE / FOYER - LATE AFTERNOON

Mia standing at the door, she's wearing her winter coat and is holding the Mama-Doll in her hand.

MIA
(calling out to Grace)

Grace, Grace, come in! Please! Come inside!

But Grace won't react. She seems totally lost in thought.

(117) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Aiden leaves the lodge and heads towards Grace. He places a blanket around her shoulders. In his hand, he is holding the orange pillbox. He shakes it to gain her attention and places it in front of her in the snow. Grace keeps on praying, staring at the sky. Stray flakes of snow are starting to fall. She looks quite pale, her lips are blue. She's shaking, but doesn't seem to notice.

AIDEN
Please Grace, it's so cold.

Mia has joined him; the kids try to drag Grace inside. But she won't let them.

The two kids glance at each other. Aiden shakes his head, then they come to a decision:

AIDEN
Grace...we...it was us... We did all of this, we...we wanted to teach you a lesson...because...

MIA
(interrupts him)
It was for our Mama. We did it for Mama!

Mia's eyes are filled with tears.

GRACE
Aiden, Mia, we're all sinners on Earth, may the Lord have mercy that we may enter the kingdom of heaven.

AIDEN
Grace, do you understand? None of this was real! I didn't hang myself, either.

As proof Aiden pulls up his sweater. Beneath it we see his climbing harness, several metal carabiners dangle from it.

Grace doesn't pay him any attention. Instead, she starts to pray.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...

Aiden and Mia stare at her, they don’t know what to do.

MIA
(with a trembling voice)
We’ve got to call Papa.

(118) INT. LODGE / KIDS’ BEDROOM - EVENING

Aiden pulls out his phone and plugs it into the charger, which the kids apparently had with them the whole time. But its battery is dead.

AIDEN
Fuck.

He switches on his phone, it briefly flashes on, then goes dark.

AIDEN
Mia, does yours have any juice?

Mia shakes her head.

MIA
(sheepishly)
I was on the phone for too long... with dad.

(119) INT. LODGE / BASEMENT - EVENING

Aiden tries to get the generator going again.

AIDEN
Fuck. I know exactly how this works!

But the generator simply won’t turn on. Aiden pours a little more Diesel from a black canister into the generator. Still, it won’t start. Aiden seems desperate.

(120) INT. LODGE / KIDS’ BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia and Aiden are sitting in their room, wrapped in blankets, they seem downcast and distraught. Suddenly they hear a sound.

FRONT DOOR SHUTTING
(O.S.)

For a moment, they don’t dare leave the bed. They are frightened. Eventually they rise nevertheless.

(121) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, lit only by the glow of the fireplace in the living room, Mia and Aiden tiptoe downstairs.

AIDEN
(excessively careful)
Grace?

When they see Grace, the kids freeze: in the dark room, Grace is standing at the fireplace, a glowing log in front of her. Apparently, she has just pulled it out of the fire. The log smolders and smokes. Grace quietly mumbles a prayer, then she kneels on the glowing log.

SOUNDS OF BURNING
SKIN

An eerie image, even more so because as Grace's hands are folded, her nose and toes seem to be blackened. Are they black with frostbite or is it just the creepy shadows cast by the flickering fire?

Mia starts to cry.

MIA
I'm scared.

Aiden hugs and consoles her.

In her waistband, Grace is still carrying Richard's gun. Her religious mumbling wanders menacingly through the room.

GRACE
Therefore, I call myself guilty and repent in dust and ashes. I regret my sins, my impurity, my desire and the fornication I committed with a married man; I regret lies I've spoken and the misfortune I brought over his family...

The kids can't hear Grace anymore, they've run up the stairs and into their room.

(122) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. The kids are crouching underneath a blanket in their room.

FOOTSTEPS AND
MUMBLED PRAYER
(outside the door, they seem to come closer and closer)

Briefly a flashlight lights up the cave beneath the blanket, showing Mia's and Aiden's frightened faces. Mia is clutching her Mama-Doll. The kids listen. The footsteps and prayers have suddenly stopped. The kids hold their breath.

Suddenly, the silence is torn apart by agonized screaming outside the door. Mia and Aiden wince in fright.

BEASTLY CRIES OF
PAIN AND ANGUISH

The kids are visibly frightened. After a while the howling turns into a quiet whimper. The kids are awestruck.

(123) INT. LODGE / KIDS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Aiden has fallen asleep. A sound wakes him. Tired, he opens his eyes - and sees Mia standing by the door. In one hand she's holding the Mama-Doll. Aiden casts a questioning look in her direction.

MIA
I gotta go pee.

Aiden vigorously shakes his head.

AIDEN
Then pee in the closet. We can't go outside now.

Now Mia vigorously shakes her head. She looks through the keyhole, nothing to be seen.

MIA
(whispers)
She's not here.

Mia unlocks the bedroom door.

AIDEN
(hisses)
Don't!

Nevertheless, his sister turns the knob and pulls the door towards her.

(124) INT. LODGE / HALL - MORNING

The hallway outside the bedroom door really is empty. Still, Mia is frightened. Carefully, she creeps down the hallway, anxiously looking left and right. No sign of Grace.

Mia rushes past the door, into the bathroom. Quickly she locks the door behind her.

(125) INT. LODGE / BATHROOM / HALL - MORNING

Mia is finished, she unlocks the door.

MIA
(screams)

Grace is standing outside in the hallway. Shocked, Mia drops the Mama-Doll. Grace stares down at the girl, her fingers, toes, nose, and ears have frozen and are almost black, her shins and knees are dirty flesh wounds. She is standing still and smiling at Mia. It’s terrifying. Richard’s gun is still held in her waistband, Mama-Doll at her feet.

Mia stares at Grace, then she gathers all her courage and runs past her. She runs without looking back, all the way into her bedroom.

(126) INT. LODGE / KIDS’ BEDROOM - MORNING

Mia wants to shut the door behind her but realizes Grace has followed her. Panicking, she jumps into bed with Aiden. Her brother, too, is completely rigid with shock.

Grace comes after her, doll in hand. She plays with the doll and calls out in a pretend voice; she almost sounds like Laura, the children’s mother.

GRACE
Mia, Mia! Come, don’t be scared.

Grace’s ice-burned fingers are fumbling with the doll.

GRACE
(with the doll, in a soft voice)
All will be well. Death lies behind us. And the pains of repentance will cleanse our soul for the ascent to heaven. Don’t be frightened. Soon we will all be together.

AIDEN
(bursts out indignantly)
Don’t you get it? We’re not dead. The obituary... and everything. Wendy helped us.

Grace’s face is totally empty. She quietly lifts both her arms and stretches them out. The scarred spots in her hands are bleeding. Grace has cut herself new wounds on her old scars: now they really do look like the wounds of Christ.

The children stare at Grace in shock.

GRACE
Christ suffered for us in the flesh, for he who suffers in the flesh will be delivered from sin.
(Pause, then softly)
Now, you, Mia... release yourself from all earthly sins to be free, and bring the Lord your God a sacrifice...

Grace holds out the doll towards Mia, Mia takes her quickly.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Burn her. Free yourself of all idols. Make a sacrifice.

Grace pulls out a lighter. Mia shakes her head. Grace lights the flame. Mia continues to refuse, so Grace quickly brings the lighter close to the doll's hair. With a crackle, the synthetic hair catches fire. Sparks fly. Within seconds, the doll's head starts to melt.

MIA
(screaming)
No!!!

Mia tries to put out the doll, she beats the flame. Molten plastic sticks to her hands, Mia cries out in pain.

MIA
(screaming)

She continues holding onto the burning Mama-Doll - until Aiden swats her out of Mia's hand. The doll falls to the ground. Mia falls to her knees, sobbing.

GRACE
But Honey...

Grace draws the gun and points it at her own head.

AIDEN
(cries out)
Don't!

GRACE
(softly, voice filled with piety)
...I'll show you. We can let go. Nothing can happen to us. We're already dead. It might hurt, but nothing can happen.

Grace is about to pull the trigger when Aidan shouts out again. Mia, too, is pleading desperately.

MIA
Don’t, please!!

CAR HORN (O.S.)
(honking the same melody that Richard honked upon his departure. Drowning out Mia’s cries)

AIDEN
Dad!

(127) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - MORNING

Richard is parking his SUV in front of the snowy lodge. He calmly climbs out of the car, opens the trunk. It’s filled with wrapped presents.

RICHARD
(whistles a Christmas tune)

He takes a couple of Christmas packages, leaves the others in the open car trunk and heads towards the house. He opens the door and calls inside:

RICHARD
Mia? Aiden?

No reply.

RICHARD
Grace!? Santa’s here!

No reaction. Astonished, Richard enters the Lodge.

(128) INT. LODGE / FOYER - MORNING

At the entrance, Richard’s gaze meets Grady’s dog basket: the dog is lying there, thawing. Definitely dead.

Richard drops the gifts. Alarmed, he races up the stairs.

(129) INT. LODGE / STAIRCASE - MORNING

RICHARD
(worried)
Grace!! Mia, Aiden!!

Grace suddenly steps out of the children’s room. Richard freezes at the sight of her.

The children come running from the room.

MIA, AIDEN
Papa!!

The children stand still in the hallway, they are too afraid of Grace to walk past her.

Richard stares at the injured Grace, stunned.

RICHARD
Grace...?

GRACE
(stunned)
Richard!?

Grace stares at him in open-mouthed astonishment. She smiles.

Richard can’t understand what’s going on.

RICHARD
What’s...?

GRACE
(turns to the children)
Look! Daddy’s home! We’re all together again!

Richard stares at Grace, his mouth gaping, then to his frightened children at the top of the stairs.

RICHARD
Ok... Grace... all good, ok? Now hand me the gun, carefully...

GRACE
(to the children)
Nothing can happen to us. I’ll prove it.

Grace aims the gun at her own head.

RICHARD
(gestures to the children to move out of harm’s way)
Grace...

Richard raises his hands calmingly. Slowly, approaches Grace.

GRACE
I’ll prove it.

RICHARD (CONT’D)
(calming, with a quiet voice)
Grace... don’t to be afraid... hand me the gun...

A DEAFENING SHOT

A bullet tears through Richard's face. Richard falls to the ground and tumbles backwards down the stairs. Grace is still holding the gun. She's shot Richard.

The children stumble screaming after their father, past Grace.

MIA AND AIDEN
(screaming, crying)
Papa, Papa!!!

Grace looks as though she's sleepwalking. She is numb.

GRACE
(honest astonishment in her voice)
Richard?

The two children are bent over their dead father, crying. Grace comes down the stairs, raised gun in hand. Aiden sees this and drags Mia away from their father's body.

AIDEN
(shouting at Mia)
Quick!

Mia clutches at Richard. Grace comes closer and closer. Mia cries and won't let her father go, Aiden desperately drags her off the body. The two run out of the house.

Grace has reached Richard's body. In disbelief, she kneels down beside the dead man.

GRACE
Richard? come on, get up, Richard...

She can't seem to grasp what's happened. In a trance, she touches the gaping wound the bullet has torn in Richard's face. She stares at the blood.

FROM OUTSIDE THE
HOWLING OF AN ENGINE

Grace registers the noise. She rises. The gun is still dangling in her hand. Grace leaves the lodge.

(130) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - MORNING

Outside: smoke, swirling snow, a howling engine. Richard's car has come off the road, the children are sitting inside. Stuck in a snowdrift, the cars tires are rotating, spitting snow through the air.

Colorful packages have been thrown from the car trunk and lie sprinkled throughout the snow-white landscape as little specks of color.

Grace approaches the car with her gun. When he sees her, Aiden jumps out in a panic and tries to flee. But Mia's belt seems stuck from the crash.

AIDEN
Fuck!

He turns to Mia and tears at her seatbelt. She won't come free, and suddenly Grace is standing right by him. Smiling and calm.

GRACE
Aiden, you know we can't get away. Come on, come on. Let's go inside and pray for forgiveness and that the Lord returns Richard to us.

(131) INT. LODGE / LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Dusk is falling. The glow of the fireplace and candles cast the living room in an eerie, flickering light. The dinner table is set. Tomato soup with croutons. Grace is sitting at the table. The gun beside her plate. Aiden and Mia sit across from her. In the fourth chair sits a very dead Richard, falling into himself.

The children's eyes are red from crying, their faces pale. Filled with terror. They stare at Grace, at the gun, at their dead father.

GRACE
Let us fold our hands in prayer.

The children obediently fold their hands.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Let us now pray to the Lord our God, that Richard, your father, will be forgiven his sins and that he will return to us soon. That we might enter the kingdom of Heaven together. Forever and ever, Amen.

Grace makes the sign of the cross. She starts to sing, with a bell-like, beautiful voice she sings the song that we heard at the start of the film, back in the simple wooden church.

GRACE
(sings)

Then sings my soul
My Savior, God, to Thee.

At first the children won't sing along, but Grace looks at them sternly, until the two join in with thin and - in Aiden's case - scratchy breaking voices.

GRACE, MIA AND AIDEN
(sing together)
How great thou art
How great thou art
Then sings my soul
My Savior, God, to Thee
How great Thou art
How great Thou art

The song is over. Grace makes the sign of the cross. The children follow. Grace pulls out stickers she's made. They say SIN in large letters. She sticks these across the children's mouths, nodding in apology. Finally, she sticks a SIN sticker across her own mouth. Total silence, all three sit with their mouths glued shut in front of the steaming food.

The camera pans away from the dinner table, out of the room, past Grady's dead body, lying in its basket, up the stairs, into the kids' room where the Mama-Doll lies on the floor with a half molten head. Then onwards, out the window, down the wall of the house, moving away from the house, past the car. The house grows smaller and smaller and soon it is barely distinguishable in this endless snow desert.

(132) EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LODGE - EVENING

The sky is a deep dark blue, soon night will turn it black.

A black balloon floats into sight, rises higher and higher. Attached to it: Mama-Doll, totally undamaged, in a white gown. Slowly she floats into the blue sky, disappearing into the thick white of isolated clouds.

FADE OUT

END